



**NINETEENTH-CENTURY EUROPEAN PAINTINGS  
AT THE STERLING AND FRANCINE CLARK ART INSTITUTE**

**VOLUME TWO**

Edited by Sarah Lees

With an essay by Richard Rand  
and technical reports by Sandra L. Webber

With contributions by Katharine J. Albert, Philippe Bordes, Dan Cohen,  
Kathryn Calley Galitz, Alexis Goodin, Marc Gotlieb, John House,  
Simon Kelly, Richard Kendall, Kathleen M. Morris, Leslie Hill Paisley,  
Kelly Pask, Elizabeth A. Pergam, Kathryn A. Price, Mark A. Roglán,  
James Rosenow, Zoë Samels, and Fronia E. Wissman

*Nineteenth-Century European Paintings at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute* is published with the assistance of the Getty Foundation and support from the National Endowment for the Arts.



The Getty Foundation



Produced by the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute  
225 South Street, Williamstown, Massachusetts 01267  
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Production by The Production Department,  
Whately, Massachusetts  
Printed on 135 gsm Gardapat Kiara  
Color separations and printing by Trifolio, Verona

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Distributed by Yale University Press, New Haven and London  
P. O. Box 209040, New Haven, Connecticut 06520-9040  
[www.yalebooks.com/art](http://www.yalebooks.com/art)

Printed and bound in Italy  
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.

Nineteenth-century European paintings at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute / edited by Sarah Lees ; with an essay by Richard Rand and technical reports by Sandra L. Webber ; with contributions by Katharine J. Albert, Philippe Bordes, Dan Cohen, Kathryn Calley Galitz, Alexis Goodin, Marc Gotlieb, John House, Simon Kelly, Richard Kendall, Kathleen M. Morris, Leslie Hill Paisley, Kelly Pask, Elizabeth A. Pergam, Kathryn A. Price, Mark A. Rogl an, James Rosenow, Zo  Samels, Fronia E. Wissman.

volumes cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-935998-09-9 (clark hardcover : alk. paper) —

ISBN 978-0-300-17965-1 (yale hardcover : alk. paper)

1. Painting, European—19th century—Catalogs. 2. Painting—Massachusetts—Williamstown—Catalogs. 3. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute—Catalogs. I. Lees, Sarah, editor of compilation. II. Rand, Richard. III. Webber, Sandra L. IV. Title. V. Title: 19th-century European paintings at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.

ND457.S74 2012

759.9409'0340747441—dc23

2012030510

Details:

TITLE PAGE: Camille Pissarro, *The Louvre from the Pont Neuf* (cat. 253)

OPPOSITE COPYRIGHT PAGE: Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Jane Avril* (cat. 331)

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cracks running horizontally, across the wood grain. Some age cracks are showing signs of opening laterally like traction cracks. There are old frame indentations in the lower edge, indicating pressure on the paint film when it was quite young. De Wild cleaned the painting in 1945, removing a coach or copal varnish, and in 1982, thick yellow coatings were reduced rather than removed in order to protect the sensitive glazes. In ultraviolet light, patches of old varnish fluoresce mainly in the trees and foreground. There are small retouches in the right field below the two trees and in some traction cracks. In reflected light, the wood grain is visible in the upper half where the image is more thinly painted. The gloss is slightly irregular primarily due to the presence of the older varnish residues.

The cream-colored ground appears to be two commercially applied layers. The slightly pebbled texture is visible through the paint of the trees and sky. Using infrared reflectography, strong but cursory black underdrawing lines, possibly ink, can be seen in many parts of the image. Some lines are visible in normal light. There may be a brown sketch below the final paint layers, visible below the grass. The paint handling is sketchy and somewhat dry, with glazes used for details and dark areas. Evidence suggests that the shepherdess's blue bodice was once pink. The landscape was painted around the central figure and the animals, but the staff was painted after the background. The signature may have been executed in brown ink.

1. See Miquel 1975, vol. 3, pp. 596–97, for a sampling of the reviews and responses.
2. Paris–London 1975–76, p. 143.
3. See Provenance. The listing in Soullié 1900a, p. 18, despite the centimeter's difference in height, is the source of this information.
4. Sale, Drouot, Paris, 19 June 1987, no. 47, ill.
5. Strahan 1883–84, vol. 4, p. 51.
6. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 52.
7. Millet 1894, pp. 908, 910–11.
8. Quoted in Eaton 1896, p. 189. Unlike Edward Wheelwright, who lived in Barbizon for nine months in the mid-1850s, Wyatt Eaton spent little time there, in the summer of 1873 and the summer and fall of 1874, that is, at the end of Millet's life.
9. Eaton 1896, p. 190; Wheelwright 1876, p. 258.
10. Wheelwright 1876, p. 268.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*, p. 265.
13. George Washington Vanderbilt placed this and a number of other works on long-term loan at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1886. The works were returned to his nephew in 1919.

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## 221 | **The Sower** c. 1865

Conté crayon and pastel on beige paper, mounted on wood-pulp board, 47 x 37.5 cm

Lower right: J. F. Millet

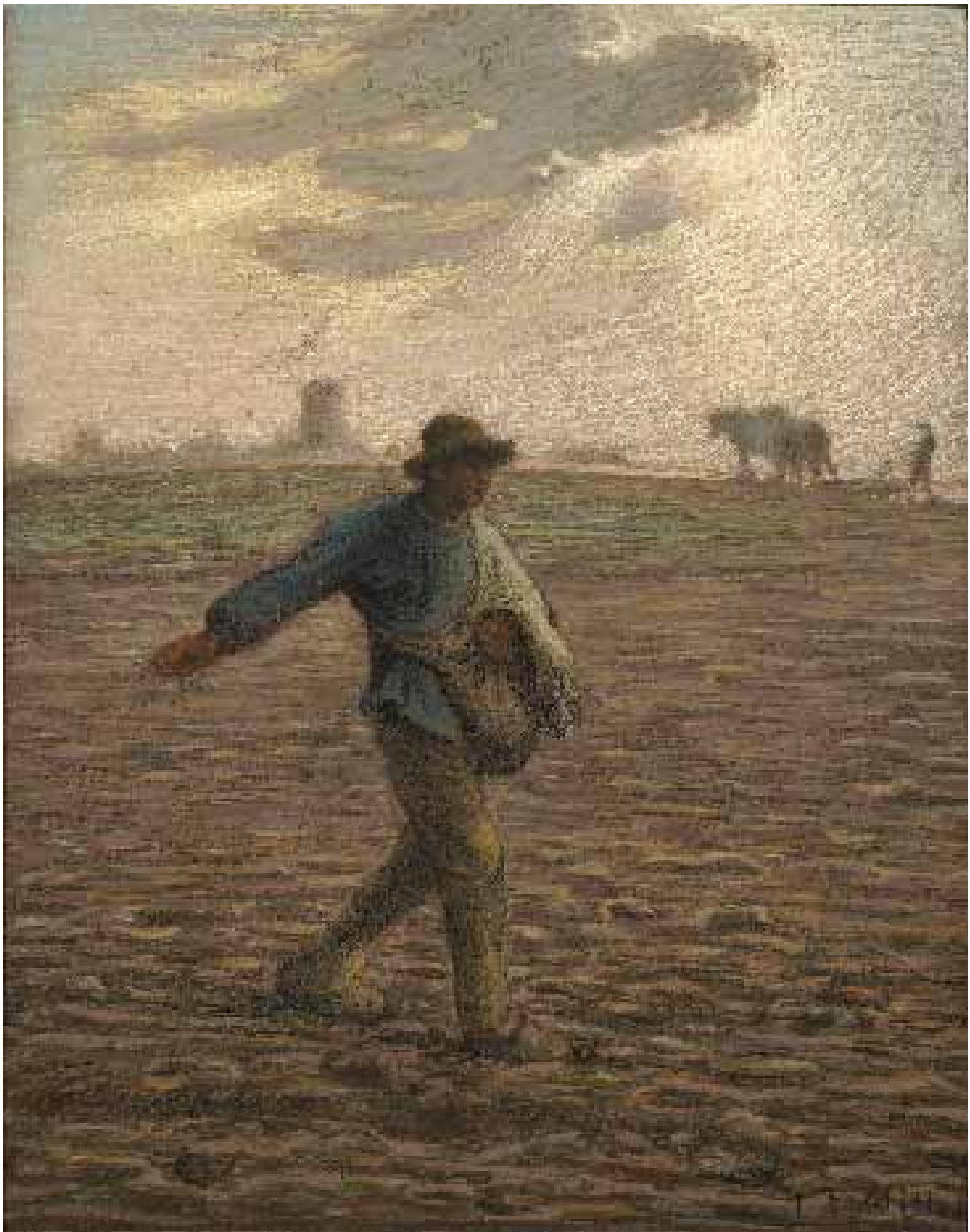
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Norman Hirschl

1982.8

In contrast to harvesting, which requires large numbers of people working quickly to get the ripe grain out of the fields and into the safety of a grainstack or barn, sowing is done by the labor of an almost laughably small number of people. Because of this, even before Millet moved to Barbizon, he recognized that the single figure of a sower could be treated monumentally.<sup>1</sup> On the sower's almost solitary task hinged the welfare of his entire family. In the Salon of 1850–51 Millet exhibited a large oil painting of a sower (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), a dark, heavily worked picture.<sup>2</sup> The critics were impressed by the power emanating from the man striding downhill, his face in shadow, his hand with the grain picked out by the light of the setting sun.<sup>3</sup>

Fifteen years later, Millet returned to the subject in a series of pastels. Four are known, two vertical works (the Clark's and one at the Frick Art and Historical Center, Pittsburgh) and two with the landscape to either side expanded to form a horizontal composition (The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, and private collection).<sup>4</sup> The example currently in a private collection was made for the architect and collector Émile Gavet (1830–1904). In addition to paintings by the Men of 1830 (Corot, Rousseau, Diaz, Dupré, and Barye), Gavet owned French and Italian Renaissance furniture and paintings by the Old Masters. As Alexandra Murphy has explained, beginning in September 1865, Gavet provided Millet with a monthly stipend of one thousand francs on the conditions that Gavet be given almost the entirety of Millet's output and that Millet work in pastel. The artist claimed "his liberty both in the choice of his subjects and in working for others."<sup>5</sup> It is possible that Millet experimented with the different formats before settling on the one he delivered to Gavet, probably in 1866 or 1867; Murphy plausibly suggests that Gavet's is the final version of the theme.<sup>6</sup>

Another, and more likely, scenario is suggested by a close reading of Étienne Moreau-Nélaton's biography of Millet.<sup>7</sup> Gavet's monthly stipend was surely a stabilizing influence for the Millet household, but



Gavet was not the first collector to seek out Millet's pastels. Moreau-Nélaton mentions that correspondence between Millet and Alfred Sensier of 12 and 17 May 1865 speaks of a M. de Thomas who was willing to pay two hundred francs for a pastel of gleaners or a sower—in a vertical format.<sup>8</sup> Simon Kelly has been able to expand Moreau-Nélaton's account of de Thomas's commission by citing letters of 3 and 13 February and 20 and 23 May.<sup>9</sup> On 19 May, Millet received from de Thomas the dimensions he wanted his pastel to be, and on 20 May, he reported to Sensier that he had started on it immediately. On 23 May, he finished the pastel, a stint of work lasting five days. Also in May, M. Moureaux, Millet's dealer, bought a pastel of a sower in a horizontal format;<sup>10</sup> this is the work now in the Walters Art Museum. It is therefore possible that Gavet, jealous of the pastels in the possession of other collectors, sought, through his subsidy, to corner the market. The fact that other pastels destined for Gavet were not preceded by fully finished versions argues for the credibility of this second explanation.

The renditions of the sower in pastel are necessarily smaller, more delicate, and less muscular than the oil painting on which they are based. Importantly, too, the higher horizon line in the pastels has the effect of integrating the figure into the surrounding landscape; he no longer looms above the viewer. In addition, the location of the field being sowed has changed. In 1850, Millet painted the sower on a steep hillside, recalling the topography of his native Normandy. By the mid-1860s, having lived in Barbizon for more than fifteen years, Millet located the sowers on the Plain of Chailly, which stretched northwest of Barbizon, identified by the telegraph tower on the horizon, already fallen into disuse. Edward Wheelwright described the plain as he remembered seeing it in the mid-1850s:

*the Plain stretches almost literally as far as the eye can reach, rising occasionally into gentle undulations, . . . but presenting a generally level and open surface. . . . and were it not all evidently under cultivation, the Plain might be taken for a vast common. . . . its great extent and generally level surface are vaguely suggestive of the sea, inspiring the same comparison between the littleness of the individual man and the vastness of the universe. One realizes there that the earth is round, a fact which the artist who studies chiefly in close woods or*

*surrounded by houses is apt to forget. "Every landscape, however small," Millet once said to me, "should contain a suggestion of the possibility of its being indefinitely extended on either side; every glimpse of the horizon, however narrow, should be felt to be a segment of the great circle that bounds our vision. The observance of this rule helps wonderfully to give to a picture the true out-of-doors look."<sup>11</sup>*

The task of the sower and the harrower, who covers the seeded furrows—though not before much is lost to the flock of birds—is made to seem manageable in the vertical versions. In the horizontal versions, the extent of the plain is more forcibly suggested and the job correspondingly threatens to become endless.

Even in the horizontal versions, though, the choice of pastel as medium undercuts the sense of heavy labor that the earlier oil heroizes. Millet had used pastel earlier in his career, in the 1840s when he was producing mildly erotic nudes. Then medium and subject matter, with their eighteenth-century precedents, coincided. The later pastels, whose subjects for Gavet ranged from scenes of farm life to close-up views of dandelions, are telling statements of the artist's forthright art making. Having chosen to set the scene in the present work, as before, at the end of the day, Millet gives more than one-third of the composition over to the sky, whose pink color tints the entire sheet. One can follow in the sky the movements of the artist's hand in the sweeping curves to the right and in the rays of light breaking through the cloud that point to the sower's head. In a witty parallel, the flecks of black pastel that describe the birds are simply larger versions of the flecks that describe the cast seed. Millet used a tan paper, presumably to give the whole a unifying middle tone and to help suggest the darker tinge of day's end. FEW

**PROVENANCE** Possibly de Thomas (from 1865); [Knoedler, Paris]; [Knoedler, New York, by 1942]; John Jay Ireland, Chicago (by 1961); John W. Simpson, New York; Mr. and Mrs. Norman Hirschl, New York (until 1982, given to the Clark); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1982.

**EXHIBITIONS** Providence 1942, no. 38, lent by Knoedler; Chicago 1961, lent by Ireland; Williamstown 1983c, no cat.; Williamstown–Amsterdam–Pittsburgh 1999–2000, p. 51, no. 16, ill., and ill. opp. p. 1; Washington–Houston 2008, p. 112, pl. 78.

**REFERENCES** Moreau-Nélaton 1921, vol. 2, p. 176, fig. 212; Amsterdam 1988–89, pp. 162–63, fig. 64c; Brettell 1990, p. 171, fig. 150; Birmingham–Glasgow 1990, pp. 52–53, fig. 55; Christie’s 1995, p. 68; Baltimore–Phoenix 2007–8, pp. 65–66, 68, fig. 17.

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The paper support, along with a second sheet of paper, was wrapped around a mechanical wood-pulp board prior to execution. The cardboard support measures 47 x 37.5 cm. The paper shows through in many areas of the image and is particularly noticeable in the sky. It is difficult to determine whether the paper remains close to its original color or whether it has darkened significantly due to factors inherent in its manufacture. The second sheet of paper between the primary support and the cardboard backing may act as a barrier to the migration of acids from the mount. The paper contains metallic inclusions, visible in the sky, which have begun to oxidize. The mount remains planar, and the stretched paper is taut.

The media is totally unfixed and is in good condition. The rich surface of the pastel is built up with layers of fine strokes and hatchings. There are a few highlight areas in white that may be particularly vulnerable to loss as they sit on top of the surface of the previously applied pastel. The alkaline white pastel may protect the paper, where applied, and may cause the paper to age differentially, especially when exposed to light. LP

1. Boston and others 1984–85, pp. 31, 33n5.
2. In *ibid.*, pp. 31–35, Alexandra Murphy lays out the debate surrounding the identity of the painting Millet exhibited at the 1850–51 Salon. This entry, as all of the Millet entries in this volume, is indebted to Murphy’s uncontested knowledge in all matters having to do with the artist.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
4. For the work in a private collection, see Baltimore–Phoenix 2007–8, fig. 19.
5. Jean-François Millet to his friend Feuardent, 5 Dec. 1865; translation from Boston and others 1984–85, p. 251.
6. Murphy, in Christie’s 1995, p. 69.
7. Many thanks to Simon Kelly for reminding me to go back to the sources: e-mail to author, 19 Aug. 2005.
8. Moreau-Nélaton 1921, vol. 2, p. 176.
9. See Baltimore–Phoenix 2007–8, p. 79nn97–99. Kelly draws on Chillaz 1997 for the text of these letters.
10. Moreau-Nélaton 1921, vol. 2, p. 176. Simon Kelly 2007, in Baltimore–Phoenix 2007–8, p. 65, identifies Moureaux as Millet’s dealer.
11. Wheelwright 1876, pp. 263–64.

## Claude Monet

French, 1840–1926

### 222 | Seascape, Storm 1866

Oil on canvas, 48.7 x 64.6 cm

Lower right: Claude Monet

1955.561

In contrast to the dominantly optimistic key of the other Monet canvases in the Clark collection, *Seascape, Storm* strikes a resoundingly somber note. Arguably among the severest works in the artist’s entire oeuvre, it might also be considered Sterling and Francine Clark’s most adventurous purchase. Uncharacteristically, the picture depends more on the play of shadow than the animating force of light, its black-green sea and vulnerable boat “dramatically heading in under a leaden sky” suggesting human and elemental peril.<sup>1</sup> Completed when the young Monet was struggling to establish a distinctive pictorial manner as well as a professional name, it reminds us of the breadth of his early achievement as a landscapist—and especially as a painter of the sea—in the mid-1860s.

The composition of *Seascape, Storm* is remarkable for its simplicity and its rectilinear character, exceptional even in Monet’s wide repertoire of boat pictures. Near the center a solitary vessel sails directly towards us, its single mast creating a vertical division that effectively cuts the canvas in two. Countering this thrust is the luminous line of the horizon, some two-fifths of the way up the rectangle, which bisects the scene in the opposite direction even more decisively.<sup>2</sup> Otherwise the wide expanse is empty, its symmetrical spaces inflected only by the rhythms of sea and sky, and the localized forms of the fishing craft. Here again Monet’s deliberation is in evidence, in the angle of the sail that echoes the clouds at upper left and in the repeated horizontals of the white surf. For all its minimalism, however, the arrangement is not without its tensions. The plainness of the seascape and the execution of much of the canvas with a palette knife stress the flatness of the design, yet the boat itself drives forcefully away from the background into the viewer’s space. So potentially disruptive is this movement that the large foam-topped wave was necessary to contain it, leaving the narrative consequences of the scene unresolved. Are the fishermen fleeing the